

b.) Remarks

Claim 1 has been amended to address a formal issue raised by the Examiner. No new matter has been added.

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, the Examiner alleged that “the retroreflective element” lacks antecedent.

While Applicants believe that a “retroreflective element” is inherent to the “retroreflective, internally illuminated sign”, claim 1 has been amended so that “the retroreflective element” now reads --the information display section comprising a retroreflective element--. Accordingly, withdrawal of the indefiniteness rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 6 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Bradshaw (EP 0 333 502) in view of McGaffigan (WO 98/53348). The remaining claims are rejected over this art in further view of Mimura, EP 1 136 847 (claims 2, 3, 6, 8 and 9), Toshiba Corp., JP 9-291280 (claims 4 and 5), Mimura and Toshiba (claims 4 and 5), Abe (claim 7), or Mimura and Abe (claim 7).

The grounds of rejection are respectfully traversed.

Prior to addressing the prior art, Applicants would like to briefly discuss some of the features and advantages of the presently claimed invention. That invention, in pertinent part, relates to a retroreflective, internally illuminated sign with an information display section having a flat or curved surface that retroreflects light coming from the front of the sign and transmits light from the interior of the sign with an illuminator disposed on

the back of the information display section. In the sign, a number of total internal reflection prismatic retroreflective elements form a continuous retroreflective plane. In particular, the retroreflective parts on the backs of the prismatic retroreflective elements forming the continuous retroreflective plane have no areas bonded to other layers.

Thus, the salient features of the present application include:

“...retroreflective light coming from the front of said sign”
(hereinafter “feature A”),

and

“the retroreflective part on the back of said prismatic retroreflective elements forming said continuous retroreflective plane having no area bonded to other layers” (hereinafter “feature B”).

These features together provide the advantage in that the information display section exhibits vastly improved visibility.

Applicants respectfully submit there is no *prima facie* obviousness as to these features even when the cited references are taken collectively.

Bradshaw is directed to an internally illuminated sign (feature A). As recognized by the Examiner, this reference does not teach the retroreflective portion of the retroreflective elements from a continuous retroreflective plane with no area bonded to other layers (feature B). This feature is said to be taught by McGaffigan. As discussed below, Applicants respectfully disagree.

McGaffigan teaches a simulated laser light system with the rod type assembly formed by a hollow tube shown in Fig. 9A. The tube has a light source 101 at one end, a retroreflective end portion 103 at the other end, and a prismatic element 104 in

between. This structure is specifically designed to internally retroreflect light so an outside observer can perceive a highly directional laser-like light through the prismatic element.

The retroreflective part on the back of McGaffigan's prismatic retroreflective elements has no area bonded to other layers. McGaffigan's retroreflective part, however, is located only at the end portion on the side opposite to the light source (as shown by 244 of FIG. 17B and 267 of FIG. 18B) and does not retroreflect light coming from outside the sign. The retroreflective end portion (see also 103 of FIG. 9A and 107 of FIG. 9B) is retroreflective only to the light coming from the internal light source.

For the Examiner's convenience, and to complete the record, FIG. 9B provides reference number 107 confusingly at two places; one of the two reference numbers 107 corresponds to 104 (prismatic element) of FIG. 9A which is not the retroreflective element as it is called in the present invention. Hence, 104 of FIG. 9A and 107 of FIG. 9B (which corresponds to the same) do not retroreflect light coming from the front of the sign.

The retroreflective element used in McGaffigan is not intended at all to have feature A, nor is there any reason to provide feature A in it. Furthermore, there is no recognition in the cited art or by the skilled artisan that the retroreflective elements of McGaffigan could be successfully applied to the retroreflective elements of Bradshaw. In any event, McGaffigan does not provide plural retroreflective elements dispersed in contact. When plural retroreflective elements are provided (see Fig. 28), they are not in contact.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that all of the Examiner's concerns are now overcome and the claims are now in allowable condition.

Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of this application is earnestly solicited.

Claims 1-9 remain presented for continued prosecution.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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